

# Lose Weight Yoga-Style

by Liz Neporent, MA

Lately, some yoga enthusiasts have touted it as the ultimate weight-loss exercise. But can yoga really help you lose weight?

One hour of yoga burns a modest 244 calories per hour. That's about the same number of calories you burn by walking briskly, but walking stresses your heart and lungs and burns significant amounts of fat. Yoga is not a great cardiovascular or fat-burning activity.

However, although yoga doesn't pack a major calorie-burning punch, it can help you burn more calories during other types of activities. Take walking, for example. Yoga improves flexibility, strength and posture, three factors that are important for proper walking technique. The more flexible you are, the more strength you have, and the more upright your posture, the longer and faster your walking stride. The longer and faster your walking stride, the better walker you are and the more calories you burn.

Your metabolism will also get a boost from yoga because it helps build muscle. The more muscle you have, the more calories you burn, even while at rest. Furthermore, according to Yogic philosophy, your thyroid gland (an organ that directly affects metabolism) is stimulated by performing yoga on a regular basis; certain poses are believed to balance the function of the thyroid thus assisting in weight management.

For emotional eaters, there is another, not-so-obvious way that yoga can help weight loss efforts. If you tend to reach for a candy bar or bag of chips every time you feel emotional, try a yoga class instead. Yoga helps calm your mind, slow your breathing and reduce feelings of depression and anxiety. Learning to relax and deal with your feelings may help you avoid bingeing and overindulging.

So can yoga be useful in your efforts to slim down? Absolutely. Should you abandon your cardiovascular and weight training routine and give up your sensible eating plan to pursue a yoga-only weight-loss regimen? We wouldn't recommend it.

Even if you're not trying to budge fat, yoga is an incredibly smart addition to your exercise routine. Who wouldn't look and feel better with stronger, suppler muscles and improved posture? Who couldn't benefit from a little relaxation and stress reduction? Yoga can be a wonderful compliment to the rest of your exercise routine and a welcome antidote to all of the pumping, pounding and stress of more traditional forms of exercise and everyday life.